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# DAVID WILKIE

*Paintings and Drawings by*

# SIR DAVID WILKIE R·A·

*1785-1841*

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DAVID WILKIE was born at Cults, which lies about twenty-one miles to the north of Edinburgh, in November 1785. His father was the minister there and his maternal grandfather owned the mill at Pitlessie. His talents developed early and were fired by a knowledge of engravings after the works of Teniers and Ostade and presumably Rembrandt. Taking scenes from the life around him he quickly learned to compose his figures in a lively manner, though the colour harmonies he used show clearly that he knew his Masters only from the hand of the engraver. His first major *genre* work was *Pitlessie Fair* (Plate 6) which is remarkable for a largely untaught youth of nineteen, not least in the way he has stage-managed his crowd. Throughout his life he was to undertake portrait commissions, an aspect of his art which has been overlooked. His earliest portraits were somewhat in the manner of Raeburn, showing solidarity but lacking the sensitivity and marvellous insight of his later ones.

In 1805 Wilkie moved to London. "There is a raw tall, pale, queer Scotsman come—there is something in him" wrote John Jackson of his fellow-student at the Royal Academy Schools. This opinion was echoed by such patrons as Sir George Beaumont and Lord Mulgrave and admirers of Dutch seventeenth-century cabinet pictures. Certainly Wilkie's reputation was quickly made and his works won enormous popularity at the Royal Academy, filled as they were with anecdote and humour—though sometimes bordering on caricature. This tight and highly finished method of painting and drawing could not forever contain his ability and fluency. A severe illness caused him to leave England in 1825 on a protracted visit to Italy and Spain. There his brush work became looser and he found that "It is richness and depth alone that can do justice to the material". His new style found favour with the King and he never lacked patrons, but his popularity with the critics and his public was seriously impaired. They found his exhibits "embrowned with the fatal glaze" and above all uncharacteristic of all they had come to expect from his brush. One critic, in fact, stated of the *Peep-o'-Day Boy's Cabin* (Plate 16) that "the picture is a masterpiece but not as a Wilkie". Many people to-day feel with Haydon and Thackeray that his style deteriorated and that his looser brush work, darker colour and Rembrandtesque lighting were all a sad tumble from the incident-packed earlier canvases. To others it may seem that it is these later works, with their powerful impact and lovely feeling for tone, that stamp him out as a considerable figure amongst his European contemporaries.

In 1840 he journeyed, by way of Constantinople, to the Holy Land. He was anxious to study the people, costumes and landscape at first hand, for his mind was turning towards biblical painting drawn not from imagination but from observation. He died on June 1st, 1841, and was buried at sea, off Gibraltar. The public first saw the brilliant sketches and drawings done on this voyage at the posthumous sale of 1842 and this was followed by a memorial exhibition at the British Institution. Since then his earlier work has been assured of brief mention in accounts of British painting, but his later work has been ignored except amongst discerning collectors. The exhibition which is being held in Edinburgh and London is the first attempt to reassess his life's work and this Souvenir is the first representative selection of his paintings and drawings in book form.

JOHN WOODWARD

88205

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST.—29¼ × 24 in. *Scottish National Portrait Gallery*

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST.—5½ × 4 in. *National Portrait Gallery*

THE ARTIST'S PARENTS.—10 × 8 in. *National Gallery of Scotland*

ALFRED IN THE NEATHERD'S COTTAGE.—43 × 61 in. *Commander A. F. Armitage*

THE BLIND FIDDLER.—23 × 31 in. *Tate Gallery*

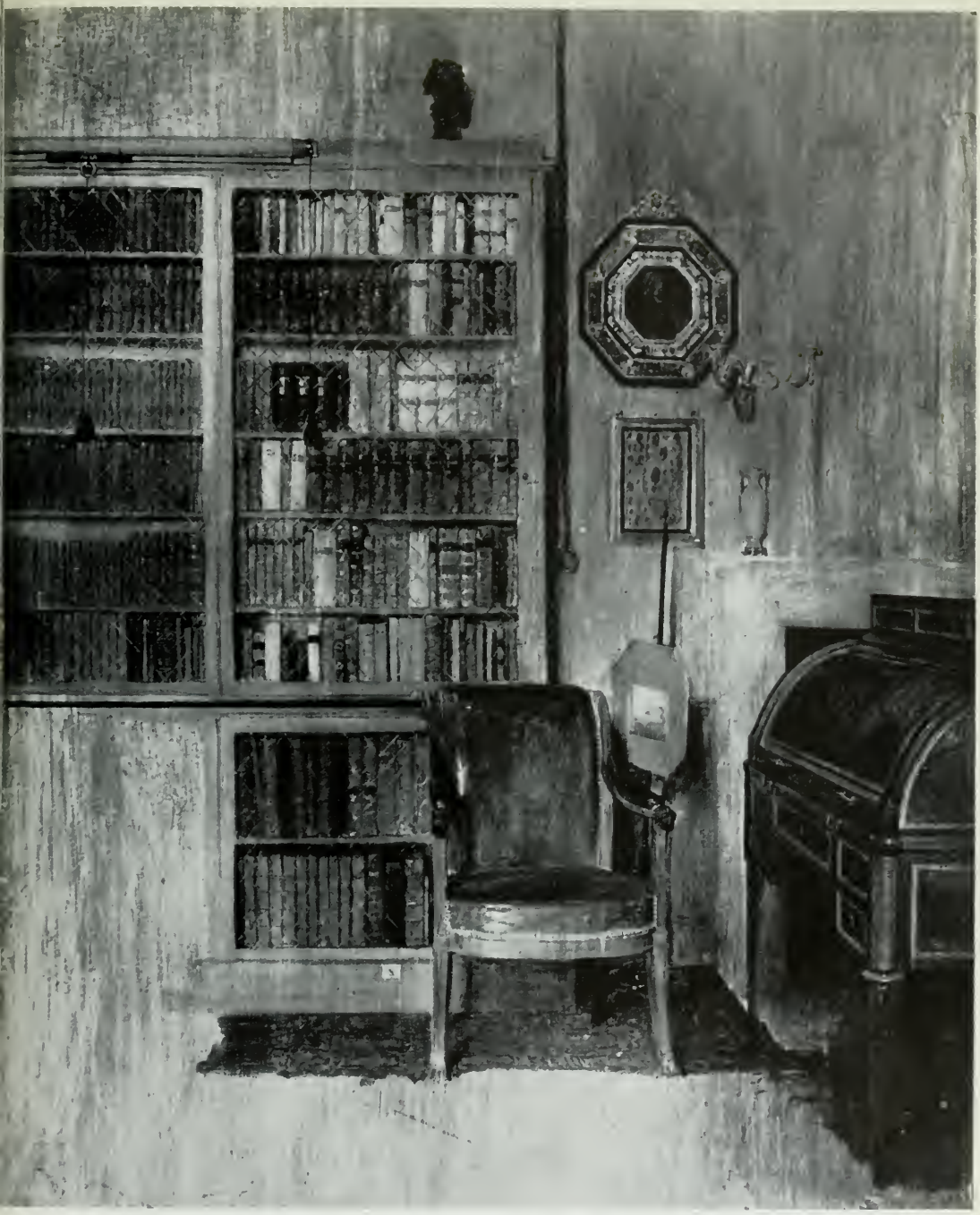
PITLESSIE FAIR.—23 × 42 in.

*National Gallery of Scotland*

BLIND MAN'S BUFF.—$24\frac{3}{4} \times 37\frac{1}{4}$ in.

*Her Majesty The Queen (Buckingham Palace)*

THE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.—24 × 19¾ in. *National Gallery of Scotland*



SKETCH FOR "THE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION."—15 × 11¾ in. *Victoria and Albert Museum*

A VIEW AT CULTS.—$10\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ in.

*Sir Geoffrey Hutchinson*

SHEEPWASHING. 35 × 53 in. *National Gallery of Scotland*

DISTRAINING FOR RENT.—32 × 48 in. *The Countess of Swinton*

THE PENNY WEDDING.—25½ × 37 in. *Her Majesty The Queen (Buckingham Palace)*

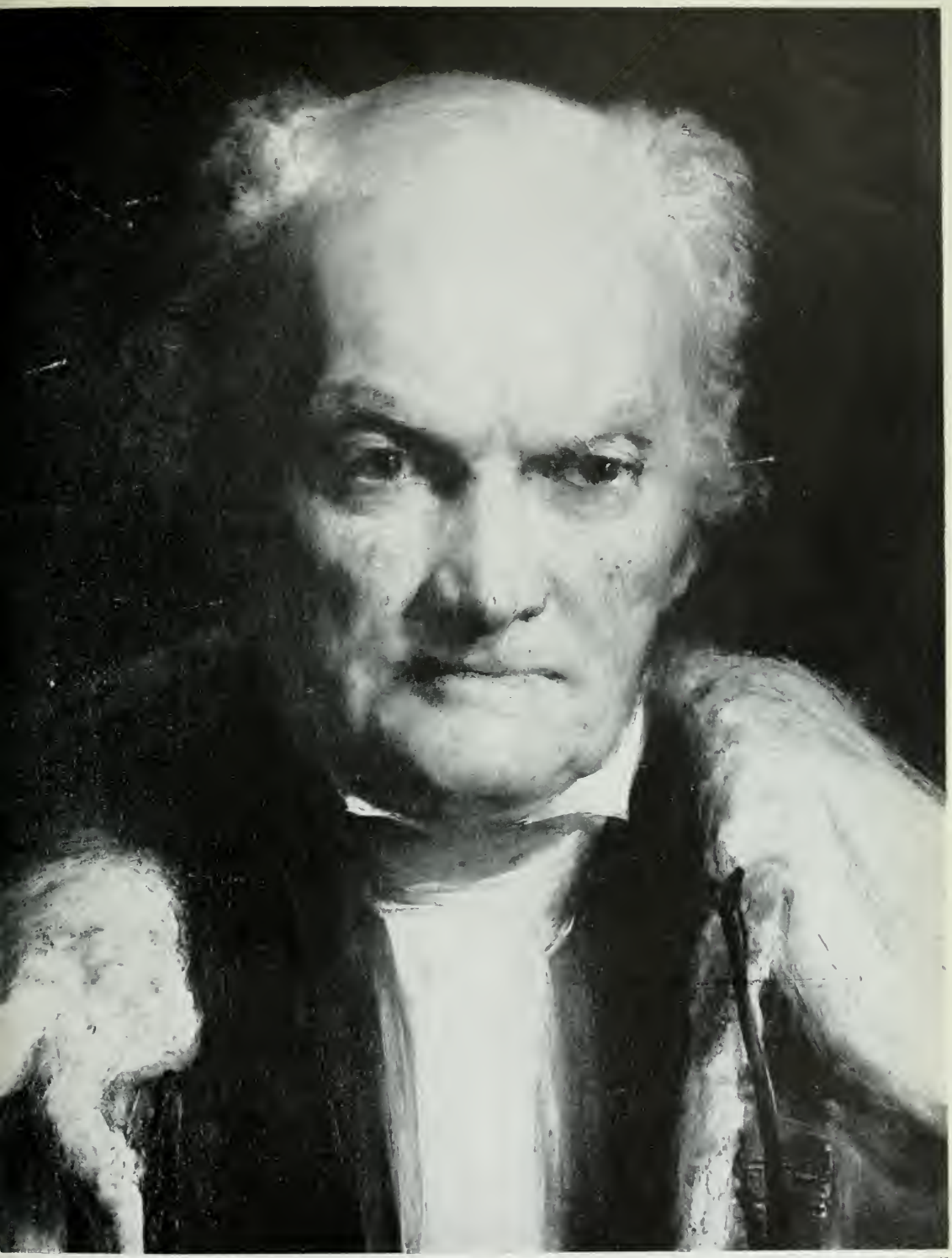
THE BREAKFAST.—29 × 26 in. *The Duke of Sutherland*

FREDERICK, DUKE OF YORK.—$23\frac{1}{4} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$ in. *National Portrait Gallery*

PEEP-O'-DAY BOY'S CABIN, WEST OF IRELAND.—49×68 in. *Tate Gallery*

THE DEFENCE OF SARAGOSSA.—37 × 55¾ in. *Her Majesty The Queen (Buckingham Palace)*

DETAIL OF "PRINCE CHARLES OF LEINIGEN."—Complete, 25½ × 20 in.
*Her Majesty The Queen (Windsor Castle)*



DETAIL OF "THE EARL OF KELLIE."—Complete, 95 × 68 in. *Fife County Council*

THE DUCHESS OF KENT AND THE PRINCESS VICTORIA.—60 × 48 in.
*Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother*

KING GEORGE IV.—17 × 10 in. *Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother*

KING WILLIAM IV.—104 × 68 in. *Victoria and Albert Museum (Apsley House)*

ARTHUR, FIRST DUKE OF WELLINGTON.—35½ × 27½ in. *The Duke of Wellington*

THE FIRST EAR-RING.—14 × 10 in. *Major A. W. Foster*

THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE AND THE FORTUNE-TELLER.—83 × 62 in.
*National Gallery of Scotland*

GRACE BEFORE MEAT.—39¾ × 50 in.

*City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham*

THE FIRST COUNCIL OF QUEEN VICTORIA.—$60\frac{3}{4} \times 94\frac{3}{4}$ in. *Her Majesty The Queen* (*Windsor Castle*)

VISCOUNT ARBUTHNOTT.—58 × 84½ in. *Laurencekirk Town Council*

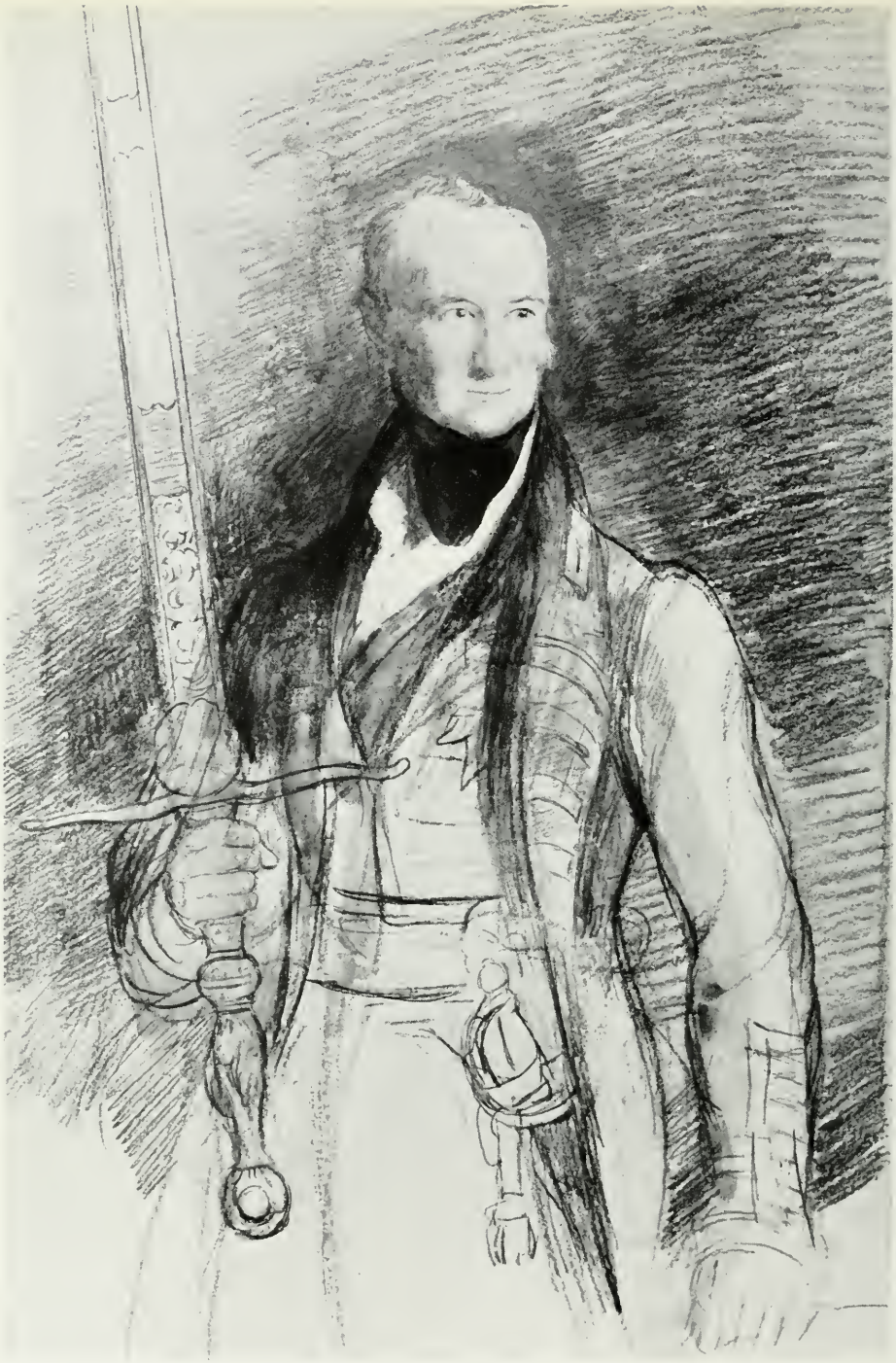
THE PREACHING OF KNOX BEFORE THE LORDS OF THE CONGREGATION. 19½ × 24½ in.
*National Trust (Petworth House)*

MUHEMET ALI.—24 × 20 in. *Tate Gallery*

SULTAN ABDUL MEEDGID.—27½ × 23½ in. *Her Majesty The Queen (Buckingham Palace)*

THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.—11 × 8 in. *Dr. I. R. C. Batchelor*

MARIA, LADY CALLCOTT.—14½ × 12 in. *John Bryson, Esq.*



THE EARL OF MORTON CARRYING THE SWORD OF STATE.—$19\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{5}{8}$ in.
*Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.*

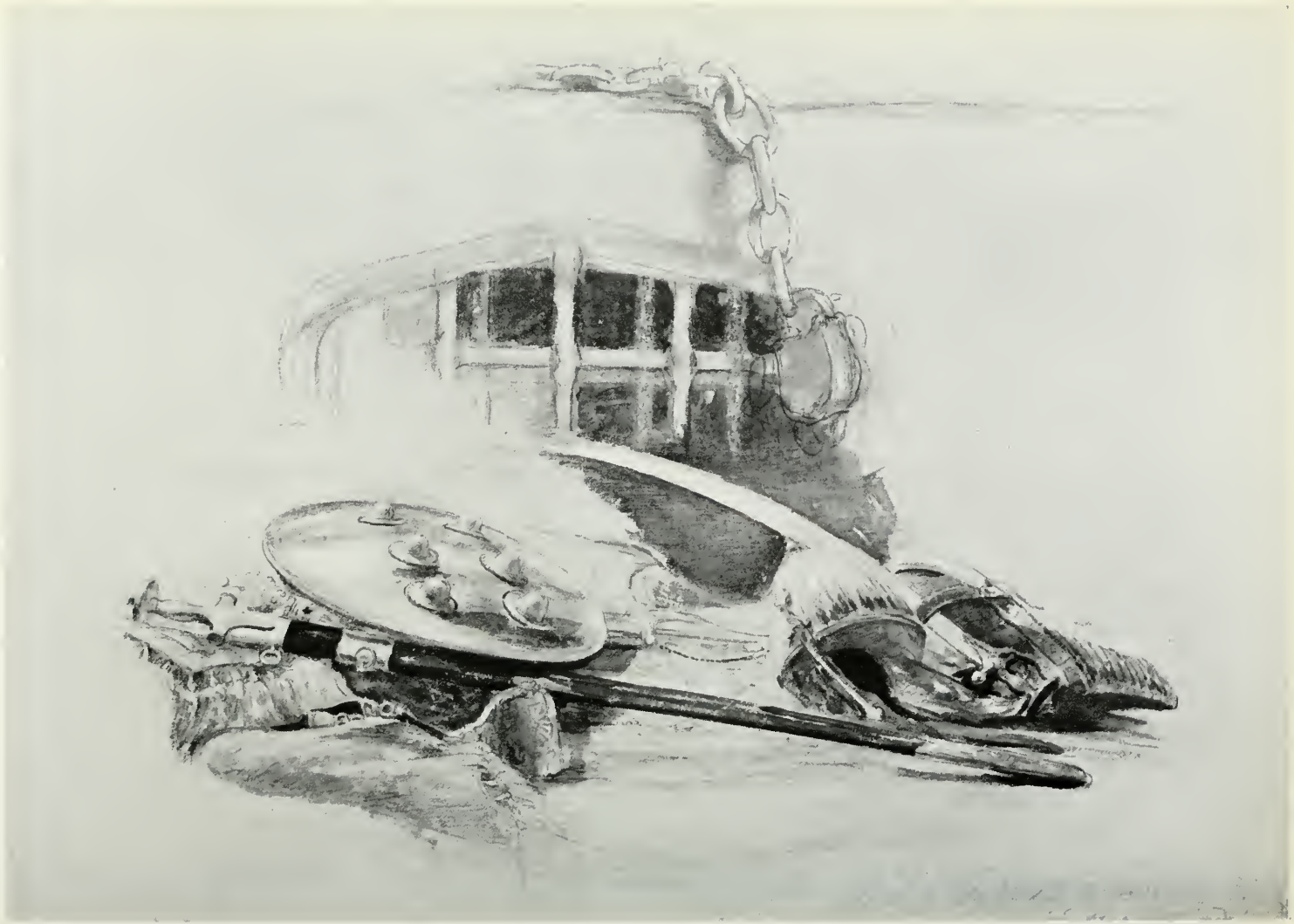
A WOMAN TIRING HER HAIR.—13⅜ × 10⅜ in. *Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

KING WILLIAM IV.—18 × 13 in. *Mrs. T. G. Winter*

THE ARTIST'S SISTER.— $18\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{4}$ in. *Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

QUEEN VICTORIA.— $11\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{5}{8}$ in. *Her Majesty The Queen (Royal Library, Windsor Castle)*

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.—19½ × 14½ in. *Mrs. Anthony Milward*



A GROUP OF ORIENTAL ARMS AND ARMOUR.—14¼ × 20¾ in. *Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

STUDY OF A GREENWICH PENSIONER.—14¼ × 10 in. *National Gallery of Scotland*

STUDY OF THE QUEEN AND AN ATTENDANT FOR "THE ESCAPE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS FROM LOCH LEVEN."—18 × 11½ in. *City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham*

STUDIES OF A HIGHLAND BOATMAN AND A HAND HOLDING A LANTERN.—15⅞ × 11¼ in.
*Sir Bruce Ingram*

THE LETTER WRITER, CONSTANTINOPLE.—$14\frac{5}{8} \times 11\frac{5}{8}$ in. *Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

SOTIRI, CHIEF ALBANIAN OF MR. COLQUHOUN.—$18\frac{5}{8} \times 12\frac{7}{8}$ in.
*Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

STUDY OF A NEGRO FOR "THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE AND THE FORTUNE-TELLER." —17 × 13½ in.
*The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry*

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